

TO: The Michigan Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes

FROM: Sylvia M. Taylor Ph.D., Adjunct Assistant Professor

University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment

REGARDING: Public testimony on the Department of Natural Resources Living Legacies or
Biodiversity Stewardship Area Program

February 6, 2012, Gaylord MI

As a TWS certified Wildlife Biologist since 1979, a member of the Society of American foresters since 1980 and a member of several other conservation organizations, I was honored to represent the Michigan Natural Areas Council on the DNR Southern Michigan Living Legacies Core Design Team which met frequently from October 2010 through July 2011. Some members of our team held additional meetings at the sub regional level. Those attending or contacted for input to the these meetings included a long list of collaborators including public land managers, conservationists and some of Michigan's most outstanding natural resource scientists. Field trips to areas needing additional investigation were also conducted. We were assisted throughout by an excellent DNR staff support team which provided technical assistance and information about management objectives on State land.

The results of our study produced the first credible and comprehensive map of Southern Michigan areas most important for future biodiversity stewardship. This map will be of enormous use to landowners seeking support for care for their land and for non-profit and agency groups looking to the most cost efficient use of their limited stewardship resources.

To me, the exercise was a revelation of how Southern Michigan's beautiful mixed landscape enriches the biodiversity of the southern part of our State. Long corridors of forest lined waterways connecting lakes, wetlands, open fields and cropland serve wildlife diversity. Although professionally managed, small commercial forests are relatively few in number compared to neglected or abused farm woodlots, these all contribute to the sustainability of our mixed hardwood resource. Embedded within this mosaic are special places. Some have rare or endangered species or natural communities. Some are rare outliers of biological communities more common in more southern regions or relicts of long ago Southern Michigan conditions. These are of great value in understanding broad climatic influences.

I urge you to encourage the Director of the Department of Natural Resources to make the results of our Southern Michigan studies quickly and easily available to the public. There is no good reason to hold it up while awaiting results from our northern regions where multi-resource management may be contentious. At the present rate of progress we will be past the time for a scheduled ten-year review before our, by then, out of date first effort is revealed.

There is no good justification for our four very individual regions being forced to embrace a "one size fits all" set of standards for designation of biodiversity stewardship areas. It would be a waste of the excellent work of many dedicated people to delay releasing the Southern Michigan Biodiversity Stewardship map while awaiting resolution of unsettled issues in other parts of the State..

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sylvia M. Taylor